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Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 61/139 on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa and draws on information received from a number of United Nations organizations. It updates the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-first session (A/61/301) and contains an overview of regional developments across the continent as well as information on specific areas of inter-agency cooperation. The period covered is 2006 and the first half of 2007.

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I. Introduction

1. The humanitarian situation in most operations in Africa[1] continued to pose a variety of challenges during the reporting period. Efforts to achieve durable solutions for millions of displaced persons[2] were reviewed and adjusted as situations evolved. Successful peace processes have paved the way for the return of an estimated 2.1 million[3] displaced persons, with refugee returns increasing by 11 per cent compared to 2005. A number of refugees who cannot or have chosen not to repatriate will be able to integrate locally in their country of asylum, and thousands of refugees from the region have been resettled to third countries.

2. Thanks to the preceding solutions, there was a slight decline in the estimated number of displaced persons in Africa in 2006. Nonetheless, that decrease cannot hide the grim reality of the extent of forced displacement on the continent. A number of new, renewed or intensified crises produced tens of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, particularly in the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and the Darfur region of the Sudan. With 2.4 million refugees, Africa hosts a quarter of the world's refugee population, and three out of the top five refugee-producing countries are in Africa. With almost half of the world's 24.5 million internally displaced persons, Africa remains the continent most affected by conflict-related internal displacement. The Sudan alone accounts for more than 5 million IDPs, northern Uganda for between 1.2 and 1.7 million IDPs and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo there are some 1.1 million IDPs.

3. Behind those figures lie the challenges of assisting displaced populations struggling to exist in a bleak environment. Most of the 14.2 million internally displaced persons and refugees in Africa are caught in protracted situations and dependent on limited assistance, and a growing number live in great insecurity. At the same time, further measures and support are needed urgently to ensure that returnees can re-establish themselves in their home communities through reintegration, livelihood and development activities in countries emerging from conflict. The above is all the more pertinent considering that 28 of the 31 lowest-ranking countries on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index[4] are in Africa, with almost half of the population on the continent surviving on less than one dollar a day.

II. Regional overviews

A. East Africa and the Horn of Africa

4. The humanitarian situation in East Africa and the Horn of Africa is of increasing concern to the international community. Despite positive political and security developments in Southern Sudan and in northern Uganda, which have allowed some of the displaced populations to return home, a combination of

[1] In the present report, "Africa" refers to sub-Saharan Africa.

[2] Displaced persons comprise internally displaced persons and refugees.

[3] The statistical information on spontaneous returns of displaced persons is incomplete, and it is assumed that the numbers are actually higher.

[4] United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2006* (New York, 2006).

man-made and natural disasters affecting the subregion have driven people from their homes in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. The overall number of refugees and asylum-seekers in the subregion rose by some 88,000.

The Sudan

5. The situation in the Sudan is extremely complex. Southern Sudan is struggling to rebuild itself after more than two decades of conflict. Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, close to 157,000 refugees have returned to Southern Sudan from the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. The refugee return operations from the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were completed in April 2007, and the joint Government of National Unity, Government of Southern Sudan and United Nations return operation for internally displaced persons from the north to the south was launched in 2006. Since the signing of the Agreement, an estimated 1.4 million IDPs have gone back to their areas of origin.

6. In Eastern Sudan, a region plagued by chronic food insecurity and with few livelihood opportunities, there are some 68,000 IDPs and over 133,000 Eritrean refugees in need of humanitarian assistance. Many of the Eritrean refugees have been living in camps for the last four decades; they are the oldest refugee group in Africa. New refugees from Eritrea have been arriving at a steady pace since 2004, including almost 8,600 in 2006, straining already overstretched resources. The lifting of access restrictions to Kassala State in late 2006 has facilitated humanitarian work.

7. More than half of Darfur's estimated population of 6 million is directly or indirectly affected by a conflict that the May 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement is failing to resolve. Violent incidents, including sexual assaults on women, occur almost daily. Attacks on villages and IDP camps by various militias continue, while the presence of weapons in IDP camps is an increasingly worrying phenomenon.

8. By 2007, the violence took on a regional dimension, having generated not only 2.1 million internally displaced persons in Darfur, but also over 235,000 refugees in eastern Chad, as well as an additional influx of 2,600 people from South Darfur into the north-eastern Central African Republic. Fighting is intermittent along the Chadian-Sudanese border in eastern Chad, and growing insecurity in Chad itself has triggered the flight of 25,000 Chadian asylum-seekers to West Darfur. Some 3,000 asylum-seekers from the Central African Republic, where the security situation has worsened, have fled to the Darfur region. The overall deterioration of security conditions has seriously hampered efforts to protect civilians, limiting access to needy populations to such an extent that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has only irregular access to half the IDPs in West Darfur.

Somalia

9. Years of anarchy, violence and human rights abuses have resulted in the internal and external displacement of thousands of Somalis. Currently, out of a population of 7 million, there are some 450,000 Somali refugees worldwide and an estimated 400,000 to 500,000 internally displaced persons, mainly from South and Central Somalia. Conflict between the Transitional Federal Government and the Union of Islamic Courts worsened during the first quarter of 2007, when Mogadishu

witnessed its most violent fighting in almost two decades. This resulted in the displacement of some 390,000 people, and by June 2007, fewer than 125,000 had been able to return to the capital. The human impact of renewed violence and repeated displacement is reflected in deteriorating mortality and malnutrition rates. Internally displaced persons are struggling to meet their most basic needs in a context where drought, floods, severe food insecurity and loss of access to grazing land and water resources have already disrupted their precarious livelihood opportunities. Insecurity also severely limits the humanitarian community's access and ability to maintain a presence inside Somalia.

Ethiopia

10. Following renewed instability in Somalia, several thousands of refugees arrived in eastern Ethiopia. Floods in several regions as well as clashes in south-eastern Ethiopia triggered the internal displacement of several thousand people. Accurate information on internally displaced persons is not yet available, and a national assessment is planned for 2008. In April 2007, the United Nations country team and other key partners adopted the cluster approach in a move to improve the quality of their interventions.

Kenya

11. Kenya has been a main country of refuge for Somalis for the last 15 years and presently hosts some 185,500 Somali refugees. In 2006, 34,000 new refugees were transferred from the Somalia-Kenya border to the Dadaab camps in the eastern part of the country. Following Kenya's decision to close the border with Somalia on security grounds in January 2007, only a few Somalis found their way into Kenya. The Kenyan Government requested that all Somali refugees who arrived in 2007 be transferred to Kakuma camp.

12. Compounding the challenges of responding to the humanitarian and international protection needs of the refugees living in Dadaab were the floods that hit the region in late 2006. Floods claimed the lives of five refugees, destroyed the shelters of more than 20,000 and affected a total of 102,000 refugees. Subsequently, there was a rise in various health and nutrition problems, such as malaria, diarrhoea and malnutrition.

Uganda

13. Peace talks between the Government and the Lord's Resistance Army led to a cessation of hostilities in northern Uganda, in August 2006. Improved security, access to land and freedom of movement encouraged some 300,000 internally displaced persons to move out of the camps. Nevertheless, securing the peace is a challenge, and some 1.2 million IDPs continue to endure dire living conditions in overcrowded camps with limited access to basic services. Humanitarian agencies strived to improve living conditions in the 266 rural sites hosting IDPs.

14. During the reporting period, Uganda also hosted some 217,000 refugees, mainly from the Sudan. Unlike many refugees in the region, they have achieved some degree of food self-sufficiency because they have access to land for agricultural purposes.

B. West Africa

15. Although peace processes are steadily taking hold and major parts of West Africa remained relatively stable, political and social turbulence in Guinea, clashes at the border between Guinea-Bissau and Senegal and the volatile situation in Côte d'Ivoire forced the United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners to strengthen emergency preparedness and update contingency plans.

Côte d'Ivoire

16. The signing of the Ouagadougou Agreement in March 2007 raised cautious hopes for the establishment of sustainable peace and the possible voluntary return of an estimated 709,000 internally displaced persons and some 26,000 refugees and asylum-seekers. However, prospects for sustainable return and reintegration of displaced persons remain uncertain given the conditions in their communities of origin, notably the lack of security, the occupation of land and use of property by rival communities. There is a need to establish a national legal framework to protect internally displaced persons' rights, complementary to creating conditions conducive for return.

17. The Ouagadougou Agreement led to a renewed commitment to organizing "audiences foraines" — mobile courts that can conduct belated birth registrations and issue birth certificates. Such documents can be used to establish nationality and enable Ivorians to vote in future elections.

Liberia and countries of asylum

18. June 2007 marked the completion of the repatriation of Liberian refugees from neighbouring countries. In total, more than 600,000 Liberian refugees and IDPs returned home, with almost half of the 110,000 assisted refugee returns taking place from Guinea. Efforts are now focused on assisting returnees to reintegrate. However, recovery programmes by the Government of Liberia and the international community are largely insufficient to cover the needs in a country emerging from 15 years of civil war. Building a sustainable peace also requires establishing the rule of law and respect for human rights. The most common problems that require immediate attention are violations of children's rights, rape, domestic violence, physical assault, corruption and property disputes. For refugees remaining in countries of asylum, local integration[5] is being promoted.

The Gambia, Senegal and Togo

19. The arrival of over 6,000 refugees from the Casamance region in Senegal, fleeing a resurgence of clashes between rebel groups and the Senegalese army in August 2006, put added pressure on the resources of the 43 host villages in the Gambia.

20. As reconciliation initiatives continue in their country, some 2,900 refugees have returned to Togo from Benin and Ghana. The organized repatriation of up to 11,000 Togolese refugees is expected to be completed by the end of 2008.

[5] Local integration is one of the three durable solutions that UNHCR pursues for refugees. It is a complex process with distinct but interrelated legal, economic and sociocultural dimensions, including the acquisition of citizenship of the country of asylum.

21. In June 2007, the Government of Mauritania announced that Mauritanian refugees could return home, most having been in exile for close to 20 years, and asked UNHCR to be part of the return and reintegration process. It is expected that the first return movement will start in October 2007.

C. Central Africa and the Great Lakes region

22. Notwithstanding a consolidation of peace processes, the subregion is still characterized by a high degree of unpredictability and continues to host the largest refugee population on the continent, some 1.2 million refugees.

Burundi

23. Hopes for stability and peace were boosted by a ceasefire agreement between the Government and the country's last active rebel group, the National Liberation Front, in September 2006. In the light of the improving security situation and the resolution of a number of post-conflict issues, UNHCR and its partners took a proactive stance on voluntary returns. However, the assisted return of 49,000 people in 2006 and 2007 was at a lower level than expected, owing to the persistence of political uncertainty, slow implementation of the ceasefire provisions, lack of access to land and basic services and a lack of reintegration opportunities, as well as food insecurity resulting from drought and floods. Recently, UNHCR has started to provide cash grants to returnees and the World Food Programme (WFP) has increased the food ration package from three to four months to sustain the returns. In tandem with voluntary repatriation, the options of resettlement and local integration are being explored for the remaining 350,000 Burundians in asylum countries.

24. The authorities of the United Republic of Tanzania have reinforced a nationwide exercise to deport illegal migrants. During the reporting period, a number of Burundian refugees residing in camps were deported to their country of origin, but were later readmitted.

Chad

25. The worsening security environment in the border regions of Chad, the Central African Republic and the Darfur region of the Sudan led to massive displacements, affecting most critically Chad. Ongoing violence in the Central African Republic resulted in additional refugee flows into southern Chad.

26. In eastern Chad, where UNHCR continued to assist new arrivals from Darfur, the humanitarian situation took a sharp turn for the worse. Fighting between Government forces and the Chadian armed opposition, as well as inter-ethnic conflicts, forced humanitarian staff to relocate temporarily and to put emergency procedures in place to continue assisting 221,000 refugees.

27. Fighting caused considerable civilian casualties and the additional internal displacement of 170,000 people by June 2007. Many internally displaced persons have no access to land for cultivation and cannot meet their families' needs. Humanitarian agencies make every effort to provide basic assistance and protection to IDPs who live in villages or settlements. With access being hampered in border areas, relief and protection activities are insufficient to meet needs. The depletion of

natural resources, such as water, firewood and pastures, is of concern and has resulted in tension between refugees and IDPs, and the local population.

28. Meanwhile, an overriding preoccupation for UNHCR is to maintain the humanitarian and civilian character of the camps, as rebel groups from the Sudan have been recruiting refugees, including children, in and around some camps. In addition to working with the Government of Chad to strengthen its capacity to improve security conditions, the international community has been advocating for the establishment of a multidimensional United Nations presence to ensure security for refugees in and around the camps, for internally displaced persons and for humanitarian workers. Visible efforts by the Government to restore law and order have nevertheless not prevented continuing harassment of and violence against humanitarian staff, IDPs and refugees.

Central African Republic

29. In addition to hosting refugees arriving from conflicts in neighbouring Darfur and Chad, the Central African Republic is having to deal with its own internal problems. The serious deterioration in security, human rights and socio-economic conditions in the north continued to trigger new refugee arrivals in southern Chad and Cameroon, but also produced an influx into Southern Darfur. At the same time, the number of internally displaced persons increased from 150,000 to over 212,000 people during the first quarter of 2007. Out of a population of 4.2 million, 290,000 Central Africans have been forcibly displaced. In addition to insecurity and threats to staff, claiming the life of one worker of a non-governmental organization in June 2007, the lack of access and a dearth of humanitarian partners are major constraints to providing assistance and protection to the displaced population.

30. Voluntary repatriation operations to both Southern Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo resumed in December 2006, after a suspension of several months owing to various factors. The voluntary repatriation operation for Sudanese refugees was completed in May 2007, and the repatriation of Congolese refugees is expected to be completed shortly.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

31. The first democratic elections in 46 years and progress made in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups helped to create an environment conducive to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to some areas. In total, more than 600,000 IDPs and 42,000 refugees returned home between July 2006 and June 2007. Even though progressive stabilization in some regions nurtures hopes for an increase in repatriation movements, serious gaps in the reintegration support provided to returnees are hampering returns. Returnees often go home to find their villages completely destroyed. In a country where the maternal mortality rate is one of the highest of the world, with 1,289 deaths per 100,000 live births, access to health care remains particularly problematic.

32. Furthermore, the crisis in North Kivu has prompted the new displacement of more than 150,000 people in North Kivu, accounting for 60 per cent of the 1.1 million IDPs in the country.

D. Southern Africa

33. With relative stability in most parts of Southern Africa and the completion, in March 2007, of the organized repatriation of Angolan refugees, the number of refugees and others of concern to UNHCR continued to decline. In total, some 450,000 Angolan refugees have returned home since 2002, including some 300,000 who returned spontaneously. Notwithstanding a relatively stable humanitarian situation, economic and social problems in Angola remain a major challenge, particularly in the remote border regions to which most refugees have returned. The voluntary repatriation operation from Zambia, which hosts some 61,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, began in May 2007 with some delays owing to persisting pockets of insecurity in Katanga Province and some logistics problems.

34. Of particular note was the increasing willingness of Governments in the region to discuss options for local integration for long-term refugee populations, such as the refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Angola and the Angolans in Botswana, Namibia and Zambia.

35. The subregion is facing increasing mixed flows of refugees and economic migrants, who are putting a strain on the asylum regime and have led to tighter border controls in some countries. During the period, UNHCR kept a strong focus on ensuring that Governments have effective mechanisms in place and the capacity to identify people in need of international protection.

36. Of growing concern is the situation in Zimbabwe, where the economic structure is deteriorating and there is a political impasse. United Nations agencies have been monitoring the situation closely.

III. Specific areas of inter-agency cooperation

A. The cluster approach

37. Since its introduction in late 2005, the cluster approach[6] has helped to strengthen efforts to address the needs of internally displaced persons, at both global and field levels. Global clusters have clarified areas of responsibilities, reviewed standards and existing response capacities, and provided support to the field. Operational tools and guidelines, such as an inter-agency IDP protection handbook, are being developed to support humanitarian actors. The internally displaced persons profiling guidance was finalized through an inter-agency process, and IDP profiling exercises were conducted in Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire and, more recently, in Chad and the Central African Republic to understand the situation of IDPs better. The global clusters have further provided staff deployments, training and technical support to strengthen the capacity of Governments, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations partners to address the protection and assistance needs of IDPs.

38. At the field level, the cluster approach was applied in seven ongoing operations in Africa: Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

[6] The cluster approach is a humanitarian coordination structure aimed at enhancing the predictability and accountability of humanitarian response.

Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia and Uganda. The approach has increased coordination among United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and Red Cross and Red Crescent partners, leading to joint assessments, development of common strategies, combined advocacy and more information-sharing. There is anecdotal evidence that some activities are having a positive impact on IDPs. For example:

- In Somalia, a general profiling exercise concluded in early 2007 provided information on the living conditions and profile of Somali IDPs in five main towns, including Mogadishu. UNICEF used that data to distribute family relief kits to some 10,000 affected families in Mogadishu.
- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mortality rates related to epidemics and malnutrition were generally reduced through increased vaccination coverage, the strengthening of the capacity of medical staff and improved epidemiological surveillance.
- In Uganda, an information management project gathered and disseminated information to all stakeholders on the humanitarian situation in the camps.

Nonetheless, the approach deserves to be comprehensively evaluated and an inter-agency assessment of the cluster approach is planned for the end of 2007.

B. Promotion of international protection principles

39. International protection principles underpin humanitarian interventions for displaced populations. On the whole, the principles are well recognized, but in practice, they are often inadequately upheld in the face of immense logistical and implementation capacity challenges and competing national development interests.

National asylum regimes

40. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees supported Governments in establishing national asylum laws in line with international standards and in putting into place effective and efficient implementation mechanisms. During the reporting period, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Uganda passed new refugee laws. UNHCR contributed to the ongoing review of the draft refugee law in the United Republic of Tanzania. Important progress was also made in refugee status determination. In South Africa, decisions were taken on 30,000 asylum applications under the Government's Refugee Backlog Project. Initiatives to clear pending asylum cases and establish a permanent capacity to process new claims were launched in Mozambique and reinforced in Malawi. In Burundi, UNHCR assisted the Government in carrying out refugee status determination for some 20,000 Rwandan asylum-seekers.

Strengthening of protection capacity

41. The agencies and organizations of the United Nations system continued to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights of displaced persons. In particular, in Ethiopia, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) monitored the human rights situation of internally displaced persons and refugees in the temporary security zone and adjacent areas. The activities included capacity-building to raise awareness among IDPs and refugee communities on several human rights issues. In the IDP camps in Khartoum,

UNDP and the Norwegian Refugee Council established a rule-of-law programme, which included legal aid.

42. To address the lack of qualified senior protection officers among mandated protection agencies in IDP situations, the Protection Standby Capacity Project (ProCap), hosted by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, provided 16 senior protection officers to enhance the protection response of the United Nations to internal displacement.

43. The Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights of internally displaced persons has engaged with Governments, regional organizations and United Nations country teams to improve the protection of IDPs. He has played a key role in advocacy and the development of standards through missions, workshops and sustained involvement with the African Union and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. In collaboration with the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, research was initiated to examine the role of IDPs and displacement in peace negotiations. The Representative of the Secretary-General reported to the Peacebuilding Commission on the linkage between durable solutions for IDPs and building sustainable peace. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee recently adopted the framework for durable solutions for internally displaced persons developed by the Representative of the Secretary-General.

Security of persons of concern and humanitarian actors

44. Attacks on civilians, including displaced groups and humanitarian actors, have been a continuing feature of conflict in Africa. General insecurity, notably in the Central African Republic, Chad, Somalia and the Sudan, and in parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is limiting humanitarian access. A key long-standing issue is maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum, for which UNHCR issued operational guidelines in September 2006. The issues raised in the guidelines have been most evident in eastern Chad. Armed attacks in refugee-hosting areas and forced recruitment of refugees are threats to the civilian and humanitarian character of the camps, as is the presence of weapons in some IDP settlements.

45. Further compounding the situation is the increasing frequency of attacks on aid workers, particularly in the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, the Sudan and northern Uganda. Security measures are seriously constraining humanitarian actors' access to displaced populations. The dire security situation is best illustrated in the Sudan. In Darfur, between January and May 2007, over 60 humanitarian vehicles were hijacked; 56 staff were temporarily abducted; 31 aid convoys were ambushed and looted; and 13 relief organizations were forced to relocate.

46. As provided for in Security Council resolution 1674 (2006), peacekeepers have played a role in establishing secure environments in and around internally displaced person and refugee camps, while contributing to the creation of conditions conducive to the voluntary return of refugees and IDPs.

Registration and documentation

47. Registration and documentation are major protection tools, notably against arbitrary detention, refoulement and extortion. These tools also facilitate family reunification, access to basic rights and enable the identification of people who need

special assistance. UNHCR reinforced its capacity to register and document refugees through the use of *proGres*, its registration software, in more than 80 per cent of its operations in Africa. *ProGres* has enhanced the capacity of UNHCR to issue documentation and to support Governments in this respect.

48. In the majority of refugee camps in Africa, women have now been successfully registered and have received individual documentation. That endeavour has facilitated their access to basic rights and services and their ability to pursue economic activities. Systematic registration has enabled the identification of women and girls in need of sanitary materials, which is important for their dignity and health.

49. However, additional efforts are needed to ensure that displaced children are registered in national birth registration systems. Too often, displaced children are accounted for under parallel systems for refugees or IDPs. UNICEF carried out birth registration activities in 30 African countries in 2006, including countries with large populations of IDP and refugee children, and will continue its advocacy efforts to address this challenge.

Prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence

50. United Nations entities and partners, individually, bilaterally and via inter-agency structures, have taken various forms of action to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence. Almost 90 per cent of UNHCR operations have adopted or drafted standard operating procedures for sexual and gender-based violence, which ensure that systems are established and maintained for effective prevention and response. In October 2006, the UNHCR Executive Committee adopted a conclusion on women and girls at risk, which provides an operational framework for preventing specific protection risks. In East Africa and Southern Africa, UNICEF finalized a regional strategic framework on gender-based violence and conducted field assessments in Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Zambia. In dozens of displacement settings, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) made emergency medical kits available to treat survivors of rape.

51. Consultations with field operations to establish a standard information management system for sexual and gender-based violence were undertaken in Burundi, Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania. Under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action, a number of agencies, including OCHA, UNFPA and UNHCR as well as the International Rescue Committee are rallying efforts to develop such a system. In addition, the newly launched Committee guidelines on addressing sexual violence and gender mainstreaming in displacement settings were used to help guarantee and standardize protection for refugee women.

Women and child protection

52. In addition to the protection problems experienced by all displaced persons, women and children may have special protection needs, as they are more exposed to discrimination, sexual and physical abuse and manipulation.

53. Programmes are designed with a gender mainstreaming approach to enable women to defend their rights through meaningful empowerment in community decision-making and the provision of specific assistance. In particular, efforts

continued to improve equal participation of women and men in refugee committees, and there has been noticeable progress in camps in West and Central Africa.

54. In the area of child protection, significant progress was made in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in 2006. In particular, task forces for monitoring and reporting on grave child rights violations in situations of armed conflict, usually comprising organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations, were established in seven pilot countries, including six in Africa: Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda.

55. As children separated from their family and caregivers are more exposed to abuses and potential violations of their rights, reunification of separated children remains a priority for protection agencies. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, some 930 children were reunified with their families and another 1,444 were reintegrated into their communities through the protection cluster. During the voluntary repatriation of refugees to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from the United Republic of Tanzania, a "best interests of the child" determination procedure was established for unaccompanied and separated children to prevent abandonment by their foster families upon arrival in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That procedure is now being expanded to include all unaccompanied and separated minors in Tanzanian camps.

56. Recruitment of children by armed groups remains a major concern in Africa. Continued advocacy efforts recently resulted in the release of 120 children from a rebel group in the north-eastern Central African Republic. In Côte d'Ivoire, UNICEF put an action plan in place to stop the practice. Recruitment of children continued in refugee camps in Rwanda and in eastern Chad, where several incidents of overt recruitment have occurred.

Statelessness

57. Statelessness is a serious but insufficiently recognized problem in Africa, and the two conventions related to statelessness continue to have few States parties on the continent. In 2006, Rwanda acceded to both conventions and promoted responses to reduce statelessness through the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions.

58. Pursuant to the 2006 Executive Committee conclusion on the identification, prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons, UNHCR identified situations that could lead to statelessness and supported African Governments in addressing the problem.

59. In Côte d'Ivoire, UNHCR has been working with national authorities, United Nations entities and civil society to design information campaigns on the audiences foraines and to guarantee that the greatest possible number of people are aware of their rights and nationality status.

60. UNHCR has monitored developments linked to the nationality of Mahamids in the Niger who might be at risk of becoming stateless. In Zimbabwe, the application of nationality legislation introduced in 2002 meant that a significant number of Zimbabweans were at risk of becoming stateless.

C. Durable solutions

Voluntary repatriation, reintegration and post-conflict recovery

61. Consolidation of peace processes and security stabilization enabled some 319,000 refugees to return home in 2006, mainly to Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Southern Sudan, and to a lesser extent to Rwanda and Togo. A significant number of internally displaced persons also decided to return to their communities of origin in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, northern Uganda and Southern Sudan.

62. While there are established mechanisms to provide refugees with sufficient information on conditions in areas of return and to enable them to make well-informed decisions, the same has not been true for IDPs. During the present reporting period, greater efforts were made in that direction, such as the inter-agency Sudan Information Campaign for Returns led by UNICEF.

63. The successful reintegration of displaced populations into their communities continues to be an enormous challenge. In Africa, most areas of return are devastated. Displaced persons are faced with making decisions on returning to places where there are no guarantees that their children will be able to attend school or that there is access to health care. Economic self-sufficiency cannot be assured either.

64. The needs are generally known. In the Sudan, in Blue Nile State, and in Southern Sudan, UNHCR and its partners conducted over 300 village assessments and returnee monitoring missions to collect returnees' protection concerns and information on living conditions. However, while reintegration activities continued in all critical sectors, implementation capacity is limited, and there are considerable operational and security constraints in this war-torn region, hampering returns. There are over 2 million Sudanese IDPs and 260,000 Sudanese refugees who could return and play a key contributing role in the recovery and stabilization of war-torn regions. The situation is similar in Burundi.

65. Significant attention has been paid to designing community-based projects, including the reconstruction of basic infrastructure, support to the rule of law and judicial reform. Vocational training, microcredit and peace education projects are being designed to enhance the individual skills of returnees and others in the communities of return. UNICEF, in consultation with other actors, has developed a programme of expanded assistance to returns which provides IDPs who have special needs with return packages in the main areas of return in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

66. Increasing priority is given to much-needed peacebuilding activities. UNHCR promotes peace education in refugee camps, and peace education materials were disseminated in Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria and Rwanda. UNHCR further advocates for their incorporation in the national education curriculum in countries of return, which has been done in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The protection cluster in that country has facilitated the participation of some 56,000 persons in peaceful coexistence and conflict-resolution activities.

67. Within the framework of the cluster approach the early recovery cluster was established to build a bridge between relief and development activities. In Nigeria, 10 United Nations entities successfully initiated joint reintegration activities for 10,000 returnees from Cameroon in 2006.

68. UNHCR supported the new Peacebuilding Commission both at Headquarters and in the two field pilots in Burundi and Sierra Leone. The activities of the Commission offer opportunities to ensure that sustainable reintegration issues are taken into account. Notwithstanding all of those efforts, peace in war-torn countries is generally fragile.

Local integration and self-reliance

69. In 2006 and 2007, several host countries indicated a new receptiveness to local integration opportunities for remaining groups of refugees. In West Africa, the approach for the promotion of local integration for refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone has taken on an inter-agency and subregional character, and relies considerably on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, the Right of Residence and Establishment. In Angola, where refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo are relatively well integrated in socio-economic terms, UNHCR and the Government are focusing on the legal aspect of local integration. UNHCR began working with the Governments of Mozambique and Namibia to develop a local integration strategy and revise self-reliance programmes.

70. Strong partnership among Governments, non-governmental organizations, the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and development actors is crucial to enable displaced people to achieve self-reliance. In Chad, refugees are progressively integrated into local health and education services with the support of the Government, UNICEF, UNFPA and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In Uganda, UNDP has been working with the local leadership in conflict-affected communities to implement skills development and income-generating projects that support the Government's efforts to enhance the self-reliance of those populations. Progress was made in Benin, where local authorities provided access to land and refugees succeeded in generating incomes through small-scale agriculture.

71. In many situations, however, refugees are viewed as a liability rather than an asset. Nonetheless, they offer considerable potential for stimulating local economies, either through the setting up of small enterprises or as a source of skilled labour. Refugees are also often settled in remote and poor areas which may not be priority zones for development, leading to a classic situation of a protracted refugee population remaining dependent on assistance.

Resettlement to third countries

72. Resettlement is part of the comprehensive durable solution strategy. In 2006, some 19,300 refugees of 28 different nationalities were referred from 37 countries of asylum in Africa to resettlement countries for consideration, an increase of 36 per cent compared to 2005. Resettlement from West Africa continued to decrease as repatriation to Liberia progressed. Resettlement needs remained high in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, with increasing efforts for Somali refugees in protracted camp situations in Kenya. In Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, referred groups or people in the resettlement process included survivors of the August 2004 massacre in the Gatumba camp in Burundi and Burundian refugees living in camps in the United Republic of Tanzania who originally fled their homeland in 1972, and who have been displaced over and over again since then.

D. Delivery of assistance and special needs

Humanitarian response capacity

73. In response to new emergencies and increasing needs among conflict-affected populations, humanitarian agencies scaled up their emergency assistance. UNHCR established new refugee camps in Chad, Ethiopia and Kenya and in Western Darfur in the Sudan. In the Central African Republic, WFP increased its aid operations nearly six-fold, reaching 230,000 people, including IDPs. UNHCR and its partners established a displacement monitoring network in four conflict-affected areas, where trained humanitarian observers assessed household needs in about 60 villages. In Somalia, WFP scaled up its operations to assist 150,000 of the 250,000 recently displaced people in and around Mogadishu. Other humanitarian agencies provided emergency assistance in main IDP hosting areas, such as Baidoa, Galkayo and Mogadishu. In Chad, humanitarian agencies strived to provide basic material assistance and protection to IDPs who live in villages and settlements. New arrivals in the Gambia were helped with relief items and food assistance, while targeted host communities were supported through WFP food-for-work programmes. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the rapid response mechanism, a programme co-managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNICEF and implemented by international non-governmental organization partners, continued to provide short-term assistance to over 1.7 million victims of sudden emergencies since October 2004.

74. In many operations, insecurity, natural disasters and logistical challenges required the costly use of air transport for humanitarian personnel and relief items. The World Food Programme's special operations provided crucial support to refugee and internally displaced person operations. The floods that hit eastern Kenya required the airlifting and dropping of emergency assistance for a month at the peak of the crisis late 2006. In the Central African Republic, WFP air operations allowed an effective and timely humanitarian response for IDPs in the northern prefectures. In areas with dangerous security conditions, this service is often imperative. In Darfur, relief agencies rely heavily on air transport for humanitarian personnel to access and meet the basic needs of more than 2 million people in the province. In Somalia, WFP moved critical relief supplies for other United Nations agencies for the people displaced by recent intensified fighting in Mogadishu, in addition to the ongoing humanitarian air service for the international aid community.

Food and nutrition

75. In 2007, WFP expects to provide food assistance to some 1.4 million refugees, 4 million internally displaced persons, and 1.3 million returnees (both refugees and IDPs) in Africa. Throughout 2006, WFP programmes were adjusted in response to changing situations and new displacement. Constant coordination and review of progress made during the voluntary repatriation to Liberia enabled WFP to adjust food programmes accordingly in countries of asylum. Refugees returning to Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and the Sudan under the UNHCR voluntary repatriation programmes continued to receive three-to-four-month WFP food rations as part of the return package. The World Food Programme supported the voluntary return of IDPs with resettlement rations in several countries, including Uganda and Southern Sudan, where that agency also promotes the self-reliance of IDPs upon their return to their communities.

76. The World Food Programme and UNHCR continued to join forces to better meet the needs of refugees, returnees and IDPs and have carried out 16 joint assessment missions in Africa in the past year. UNHCR has prioritized improving the nutrition status of refugees, particularly of women and children, and following joint assessments by UNHCR and WFP, therapeutic feeding programmes were implemented in Chad, Ethiopia and Kenya.

77. Despite the use of the WFP Immediate Response Account, which offers loans that can be repaid with subsequent contributions, cuts in food rations, even though brief in duration, were still unavoidable in some operations owing to funding constraints. Those cuts affected refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania; refugees and IDPs in Uganda; and returnees in Burundi. WFP and UNHCR have stressed to donors the importance of supporting both agencies to ensure the full package of services for refugees and others of concern.

Education

78. In 2006, UNHCR and over 100 partners worked to ensure the right of refugee children to primary education. The enrolment of refugee children in primary school reached an average of 75 per cent. Gender parity at the primary school level was achieved in most operations, with an average of 48 girls per 100 pupils. However, dropout rates remained a concern, as did the impact of financial austerity measures on the quality of education.

79. Special efforts were made to support access to secondary and higher education, including through specifically sponsored grant and scholarship programmes, which can provide critical skills for self-reliance and recovery processes in countries of origin. UNHCR cooperated with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to expand the adolescents-at-risk project in West Africa. That concept was reproduced in Chad and in the Congo to increase education opportunities for adolescents. In addition, girls' secondary education scholarship programmes continued in Ghana and Uganda. Scholarships provided by the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund benefited 750 refugee students in 22 African countries.

80. Offices continued to address the low enrolment rates of girls and the sexual and gender-based violence problems affecting them. Based on the UNHCR guidelines for the prevention and response to violence in schools, assessments were undertaken in Benin, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and Togo. Missions were conducted in Namibia and Malawi to develop a strategy for the prevention of violence in schools. Plans of action were drawn up for Central Africa and the Great Lakes region to increase access to quality education in safe school environments for urban and rural refugees, returnees and IDPs.

Health

81. In a continent where the life expectancy is 20 years less than the world average,[4] minimizing avoidable mortality and morbidity of displaced persons is one of the main objectives of health programmes.

82. UNHCR works closely with partners to implement health programmes in a range of challenging settings. In most camps, malaria is the main cause of illness and death, followed by acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea. In the camps in

East Africa and the Horn of Africa, the three diseases cause between 60 and 70 per cent of the deaths of children under the age of five. In 15 malaria-endemic countries, the 2005-2007 UNHCR strategic plan for malaria control guided the introduction of new and more effective malaria treatment protocols, as well as the increased use of insecticide-treated nets to reduce the number of deaths caused by the disease. Malaria assessments conducted by the United States Centres for Disease Control in the Horn of Africa led to the strengthening of both control and treatment activities.

83. An important component of health-related activities is the strengthening of the capacity for emergency preparedness and response to potential health threats (epidemics). The standardized health-nutrition information system is now operational in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Eastern Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. The system aims at rapidly detecting and responding to health problems and epidemics, monitoring trends and evaluating the effectiveness and the quality of interventions.

84. The access of displaced persons to health services in areas of displacement, during voluntary repatriation movements and upon return to communities of origin was improved. Cross-border health coordination has been set up to ensure access to medical care after repatriation for patients in need of further treatment. However, long-term access to adequate services in post-conflict areas remains a major challenge. Both the rehabilitation and the sustainability of health services are a priority for United Nations agencies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), ministries of health and other partners in post-conflict countries.

HIV and AIDS

85. Africa has just over 10 per cent of the world's population, but 64 per cent of all people estimated to be living with HIV.[7] Combating the spread of HIV among displaced persons remained a high priority for United Nations entities and partners. Work focused on the development of comprehensive HIV and AIDS prevention and response mechanisms, including increasing universal access to prevention, treatment and care. UNHCR and UNFPA improved the provision of post-exposure prophylaxis and the clinical treatment of rape victims, notably in Southern and Central Africa, and made sufficient condoms available in major refugee operations. Joint missions involving Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations were also organized in Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to assess HIV and AIDS prevalence among IDPs and to identify measures to prevent and respond to HIV among conflict-affected populations.

86. As a result of joint advocacy efforts with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), some progress was made on the inclusion of displaced people in national strategic policies and programmes on HIV and AIDS to ensure equal access to prevention programmes and treatments. Refugee sites in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda were included in the ongoing national sentinel surveillance studies. Equal access to antiretroviral therapy was reached in Southern Africa and West Africa. Sustained efforts are required to improve access to other services, such as voluntary counselling and testing and prevention of mother-to-child transmission programmes.

[7] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* (Geneva, 2006).

E. Cooperation with regional organizations

87. Regional and subregional organizations play an increasingly important role in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and early warning, which are some of the key areas of cooperation, together with the reinforcement of protection of displaced persons. UNHCR supported several meetings held by regional organizations on displacement and post-conflict recovery, including the African Union Ministerial Conference on Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Africa and the international Great Lakes conference. The African Union has been drafting a convention on the protection of internally displaced persons with support from international organizations, including UNHCR. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) sub-cluster on humanitarian response and post-conflict recovery, which is chaired by UNHCR, contributed to the African Union policy framework on post-conflict reconstruction and development. The framework was endorsed in July 2006 during the seventh African Union Summit.

88. In the area of early warning and preparedness, significant progress was made with ECOWAS. UNHCR has been instrumental in establishing the ECOWAS emergency response team, which will develop first-responders' capacities and support national and subregional emergency planning and response, paying particular attention to cross-border humanitarian emergencies. UNHCR worked in collaboration with both the African Union and ECOWAS concerning potential crises in the region that could result in forced population displacement, and also worked to ensure that issues related to displaced persons were taken into account in their conflict-prevention strategies and interventions.

F. Coordination of resources

89. Africa continued to require and receive the bulk of international funding for humanitarian crises and emergencies. Between January 2006 and July 2007, almost $7 billion was received for humanitarian activities presented in 15 consolidated appeals, three flash appeals (for Guinea-Bissau, Kenya and Somalia) and four other types of appeals. The establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund in March 2006 has contributed significantly to a more predictable response to emergencies in Africa, which received 73 per cent ($327 million) of a total global disbursement of $445 million. In addition to the above mechanisms, certain key donors have also pooled humanitarian funds in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, giving the Humanitarian Coordinators the means to ensure early funding for critical activities.

IV. Conclusions

90. **Despite optimism over some developments in Southern Africa and West Africa, the situation in the rest of Africa, notably in Somalia and in the Sudan-Chad-Central African Republic region, has remained of particular concern. Political instability and insecurity have led to further displacement, at times ruling out the possibility of voluntary return for hundreds of thousands of persons.**

91. Deteriorating security has continued to pose major problems in some parts of Africa, limiting humanitarian access and hampering the provision of much-needed assistance and protection. Those constraints, as well as the repeated threats against and incidents involving humanitarian staff, call for determined action by all concerned to ensure unhindered access to displaced populations.

92. In the past year, the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps has not always been preserved, nor has forced recruitment been prevented. The Operational Guidelines on Maintaining the Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Asylum are being disseminated in order to further promote these principles of international humanitarian law and international refugee law.

93. Partnership is crucial if the international community and concerned Governments are to protect displaced persons effectively. This is particularly important in efforts to support sustainable return, which remains the durable solution for the majority of displaced persons. However, the pace of return in 2006 was lower than expected owing to persistent insecurity, political instability and lack of infrastructure and basic services in return areas. Voluntary repatriation cannot be sustainable without effective recovery and development-oriented programmes and resolute political efforts and financial support to address the root causes and consequences of displacement.

94. For refugees who cannot or choose not to return home from exile, UNHCR is hopeful that more Governments will consider opening up opportunities for local integration.

95. Host States are also encouraged to enable refugees to increase their self-reliance by providing them with access to land or other livelihood sources. There are too few initiatives of this kind, despite the potential economic contribution that refugees can make to their hosting communities.

96. At the policy level, there are several ongoing initiatives that could significantly reinforce the protection of internally displaced persons. The draft African Union convention on internally displaced persons is an encouraging step in that direction, and it is important that it be well crafted to ensure that IDP protection standards are adequately covered. Durable solutions are well defined for refugees, but not for IDPs. The framework for durable solutions for internally displaced persons developed by the Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights of internally displaced persons shows the way forward in that respect.

97. While humanitarian actors strive to alleviate the impact of conflict on millions of displaced persons, there are no humanitarian solutions to political problems. The latter require tenacious efforts for conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding by African nations, regional and subregional organizations and the broader international community.